

Chapter 806

Our path led to a massive indoor archery range. It had twenty lanes. Each lane was clearly marked out to 150 meters plus there was approximately 20 meters of back space where the observers and archers waiting their turn congregated. I recognized plenty of the women present. There were also three men - the other male new hires. The rest of us had made it through Week One.

The guys were all dressed in suits. Ah, some of the previous conversation made more sense. I had on a tight white t-shirt, comfortable jeans and docker shoes (essentially canvas tennis shoes). The women dressed in a similar style though not identically. Tight vests, bound breasts, short skirts and short boots. I quickly made out Katrina's clan. I had to slip past Fabiola's pack to get there.

Katrina was on the firing line. My attention was drawn to the archer next to her. It was Aya and she was having a rough time of it. Her Mom, Caitlyn, was calmly trying to instruct her yet each word out of her mouth seemed to make Aya more and more nervous. I was drawn to Aya emotionally. I felt compelled to do something even though reporting to Katrina and Hayden was the proper procedure to follow.

I spotted a large bowl of fruit in Katrina's backfield. A grapefruit was the proper tool for the moment. Target in hand, I approached Aya after her latest failure. She was about to cry.

"Hey, Aya," I called out. Multiple heads turned my way. The only person who didn't seem to notice I was under-dressed was Aya. Her face blossomed and she ran right at me.

"Cáel," she squealed as she hugged my waist. I patted her back and kissed the top of her head. That drew a mixed reaction from our audience.

"What seems to be the problem?" I smiled down at her.

"I...I can't - I'm not good..." she stammered. *www.Novs/wôR@.co(m)*

"Aya's a winner," I declared. "Aya does. The only 'not' that is Aya is 'Aya is not a freak'. Did Aya get a Daddy this week?" Her face brightened noticeably. "Did Aya get a Daddy that wasn't a spy this week? Who's clever idea was all that?" *www.no(v)eŁwóτM̄.côṁ*

"Aya?" she murmured.

"Who? I didn't quite hear that," I teased.

"Aya," she exclaimed.

"So Aya's a winner. So what's the problem?" I asked.

"I can't hit the target," Aya explained.

"Yes you can," I nodded. "Let me show you." I led Aya back to the line. The liberties I was being granted weren't lost on me. "Okay, ready your bow and notch an arrow." Aya nodded and did as instructed. I'd shot a few arrows at school. Not a lot and certainly not enough to ever be considered an archery instructor. Confidence training I did know. *wWŴ.noⓈelw,r(m).c0m*

"Okay, can you hit this?" I held the grapefruit up to the tip of Aya's arrow, standing beside it.

"Of course," she giggled. I took a half-step back still holding the grapefruit out.

"Can you hit it now?" she nodded. We repeated the process again and again as I back up to her target. Occasionally I'd add, "Now track in your mind the movement of bow as you adjust for the range."

Aya nodded and before long, I was standing beside her - closer - target.

"Shoot," I commanded.

"Cáel," Aya whimpered, "I might hit you."

"Aya is a winner," I repeated. "Besides, do I look afraid? I believe in you, Aya."

The shot fell way short and skipped to within a meter of my foot. I wasn't worried. It was pointless. I tapped the grapefruit against the target. Aya looked to Caitlyn who nodded. *ww(w).nⓈ(v)elWorm.Co(m)*

"Track the grapefruit in your mind, Aya. Don't think of anything else," I counseled. "Aya is a winner."

She drew, aimed, muttered something, visibly relaxed then let loose. She didn't hit me, or the grapefruit. She did hit the third ring of the target which, by the pristine look of the paper, was her first hit of the day. By the happy looks of her family, I was right. Aya squealed and started to run to me. Caitlyn held her back. I was still in the firing lane after all.

The Fates, Fortuna, or the Norns - those meddling, magnificent, malignant and mischievous divine entities hadn't finished fucking with me yet. As I reached down for Aya's first spent arrow, something tugged at the back of my hair and the now unforgettable sound of an arrow whizzing past mere centimeters from my head registered in my mind.

Someone, and by that I meant some-woman, had tried to murder me.

"Kneeel!" Desiree's scream came a second too late. Bending over turned into a roll as I calculated the trajectory that arrow probably had taken. I righted myself, kneeling, on all fours, looking at my assassin. She was stepping out of the line-up and casually drawing her next barb.

No one was going to save me. The rest of the guys were only now starting to figure out things were disastrously wrong - for all of us. Having witnessed my murder, they were all doomed which was my assassin's true intent. Dodging arrows was marginally less impossible than dodging a bullet.

I'd fired guns before and shot a bow enough to recall that you really needed a vambrace to avoid ripping the skin off your arm. It also taught me that it was called a bow, not an eye-bolt shooter. Watching her eyes was useless. The strength of the bow was in the pull - the string. The control of the pull was in the fingers. I was watching the twitch of her fingers.

The second I saw those middle digits move, I launched myself to the left - the firing line. I saw her try to adjust, but a bow is not a gun. Once that arrow starts out, it has its own motivations. The arrow would have punched through my right shoulder and penetrated into my chest cavity. I wouldn't be dead, only fatally wounded.

Instead it passed under my chest and outstretched arm and leg as I was in mid-roll. Next time I knew I wouldn't be so lucky.

"No!" Aya screamed. That wasn't so bad, or distracting. Her running at me was. The smart play was to duck behind Aya.

If the blonde archer shot in her direction, Katrina's entire clan would have filled her with feathered shafts. I, having more love than hate, ran the other way. I wasn't going to make it. I knew I wasn't going to make it. She had her arrow out with expert speed and was tracking my path. I dove and she flinched.

The woman flinched because an arrow buzzed past her. It wasn't 'aimed' at her. It passed a meter in front of her field of vision. It gave me a step, maybe two. The arrow smacked into the very edge of the target. The majority passed through, but didn't have the energy left to hurt me. Now I was behind a target and the Amazon murmurs began.

"Hold on now," Felix spoke up. A dozen women glared menace his way. It occurred to him he was unarmed in a room full of armed women - and they weren't doing anything to help me. Suddenly we had brotherly solidarity cemented by our helplessness. The lack of noise was eerie. The ceiling fans chugged away and Aya was still crying my name. There was no other human noise.